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MARCH 1992

WIZARD®

No. 7

THE GUIDE TO COMICS

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WIZARD

Volume 1
Number 7
March 1992

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TOP STORY

X-O Manowar - Valiant's newest Super Hero has been burning up the comic shelves everywhere. "X-O" can be found in his own monthly series and roaming around the Valiant Universe

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An Autographed Set of Punisher War Journals #6 and #7!

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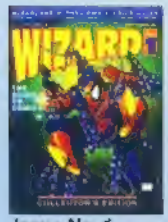
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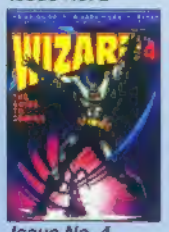
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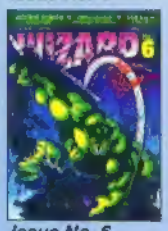
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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Welcome to the World of Wizard #7

I would first like to let you know that this letter was written as fast as a late book report. However, this time I'm the teacher, so I'm allowed.

I was just wondering how many of you were able to get a glimpse of the Gray Hulk version of issue #6, if you haven't ask your local retailer.

I hope you like our new magazine format. As you know quality throughout is our #1 priority. You shouln't have to settle for anything else.

Welcome aboard to a few members to our growing staff. I know they're going to do a great job, because if they don't... it's off to the dungeon.

This month we've added a few new monthly features, one is the covers we've received from our readers, along with more great interviews with the industry's best. Plus 2 more books sure to get some recognition - check out the Wizard Comic Watch.

Guess what? I found Zaretzky again and you know what he had this month... 4 - sixth row seats for the Guns 'N Roses concert at the Garden. Talk about incredible concerts, this one was the best I've ever been to, of course once I got my hearing back.

Well, in about a week I'll be leaving for California to meet Jim Lee and Whilce Portacio. I can't wait to go. Don't worry I'll take lots of pictures and come home with a few autographs to give away.

Remember, tell your friends you collect "The Wizard".

The Big Cheese,

Gareb S. Shamus

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A Very Brief History Of

X-O: MANOWAR

By Patrick McCallum

Aric, an alien barbarian stranded on a space craft orbiting the Earth, fighting for his life against an alien race of spider-creatures. That's how the premiere of Valiant's hottest new title, *X-O Manowar* debuted. Not much is known of this new hero, but what is known is that he's hot. So far, fan reaction has been overwhelmingly positive, and the future looks pretty bright for the "Manowar."

Part of his success may be atrributed to his uniqueness. Aric is a barbaric warrior, ruthless, a perfect fighting machine. Unarmed, he's Valiant's answer to Wolverine. Then there's the X-O armor (eXOskeleton, that is). It's a living suit of armor, one that wraps itself around Aric and responds to his mental commands. Not only that, it can grow any weapon Aric needs in seconds. Pretty nifty, eh?

So, with all that, what does he have to worry about? Well, for starters, he stole the X-O suit from the spider-aliens, and they want it back. He's also stranded on one of the most primitive planets in the galaxy, Earth. So inbetween fighting the aliens creatures hunting him and attempting to figure out exactly what the X-O armor is, Aric has to live with us humans and learn our strange ways. Not an easy thing to do, all in all, a very intruiging title and one worth giving a try!

The Fastest Man Alive

A Brief History of the Flash

By Patrick McCallum

Hey, didn't he have a TV show? Well, yeah, but there's more to the Scarlet Speedster than just a neat costume and some cancelled show. The Flash has a rich history, or rather, the Flashes have a rich history. To date, there have been three Flashes, Jay Garrick, Barry Allen and Wally West. The focus for this will be Wally, since he is the current inception of the character.

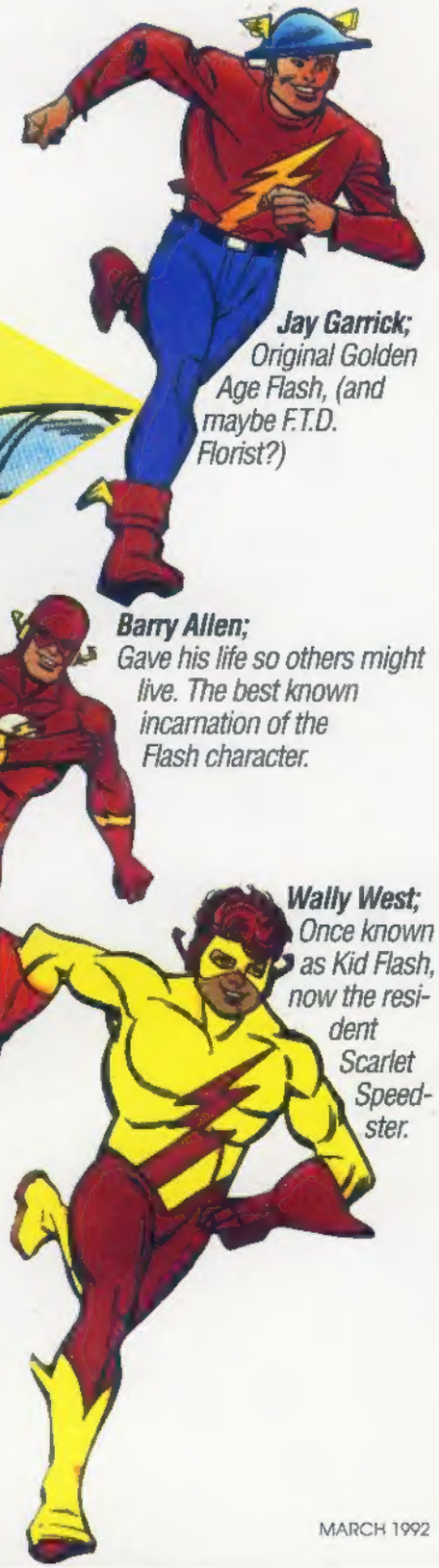
Wally first stepped on the road to becoming the Flash when he started the "Official Flash Fan Club", of which he was President, which is not hard to accomplish when your its only member. When Wally's Aunt, Iris Allen, caught wind of this, she introduced young West to her husband Barry (The Flash II) Allen, a police scientist, who informed Wally that he and the Flash were close friends. A super speed change later, Wally then came face to face with his idol, the Flash. Then, the freak accident which gave Barry his amazing powers repeated itself, as a bolt of lightning shot through a window, smashed into a cabinet full of chemicals which doused West with electrically charged fluids, endowing him with super speed. Doing what any responsible adult would do, Barry took Wally under his wing, gave him a costume identical to his own, dubbed him "Kid Flash", and they went off and faced super villains, aliens, robots, etc.

During their time together, Barry redesigned Wally's outfit which gave him a more distinct identity, Wally no longer looked like Flash Jr., but he still lived in the shadow of Barry. Kid Flash then teamed with other junior partners Robin, Wonder Girl, Aqualad and Speedy to form the Teen Titans. There Wally found a home away from home, and stayed with the Titans through all their various incarnations and roster changes. Then, later on as Wally entered adulthood, his powers began to go askew whenever he used super speed, it would cause him great pain and probably kill him if he ran for any length of time. With this, Wally decided to quit the superhero biz and attempt to lead a normal life.

For a while, everything was going pretty smoothly until a little something called "Crisis on Infinite Earths" occurred, which forever changed Wally's life. Teaming with Jay Garrick, the original Flash from an alternate dimension, Wally was forced once again, to use his super speed. In the course of doing so, he was exposed to radiation that fixed the chemical imbalances in his body that was threatening his life, and thus Wally "Kid Flash" was reborn. At the same time, the Flash (Barry Allen) was battling an entity known as the "Anti Monitor", a battle which cost Barry his life. Arriving at the scene moments later, young Wally West made a vow - that no matter what happens next, there will be a Flash, and that Barry will be avenged. So, donning the traditional red and yellow suit, Kid Flash was retired and in his place stood the all new Flash, Wallace West!

In the years since that fateful day many years ago, this new Flash has led a topsy turvy life. He's won and lost a fortune, revealed his identity to the world, struggled to live up to the Flash legend and constantly tries to make some sense of his crazy life. All in all, a very hectic life, even for the fastest man alive!

The Flash Time Machine



Jay Garrick; *Original Golden Age Flash, (and maybe F.T.D. Florist?)*

Barry Allen; *Gave his life so others might live. The best known incarnation of the Flash character.*

Wally West; *Once known as Kid Flash, now the resident Scarlet Speedster.*

VALIANT'S STRAIGHT SHOOTER

By Patrick Daniel O'Neill

With fewer than a half-dozen titles in the direct market, Jim Shooter's Valiant Comics is poised to be a power in the comics industry, thanks to a growing mass-market presence.

"I definitely want to become a full-service comic-book company; not only that, I want to go places other comic-book companies haven't gone at all".

That's how Jim Shooter, President and Editor-in-Chief of Voyager Communications, describes his company and its comic-book imprint, Valiant. Shooter first made his mark in comics scripting DC's Legion of Super-Heroes feature in Adventure Comics in the 1960's. He was, believe it or not, just 13 when he started. Later, after a decade or so away from comics, Shooter joined the staff of Marvel Comics, eventually rising to the position of Editor-in-Chief and Vice-President.

from SOLAR, MAN OF THE ATOM

But Shooter's reign at Marvel was both successful and stormy. He left that position in 1987, forming Voyager a short time later. Many have asked why he chose to start a new company, a risky proposition at best.

"Being forcibly ejected from Marvel might have had something to do with deciding to start my own company," he laughs. "I had major disagreements with the management of Marvel, during that period when Marvel was being bought and sold a lot. We parted company; it was very mutual. After that, I wasn't sure what I was going to do."

The catalyst was an entertainment lawyer and manager named Steve Massarsky, who hired Shooter to write a script

for a Spider-Man live-action television show. "As we worked together on that show, we got to know each other and liked each other," he recalls. "Steve asked me, 'Why don't you start a comic-book company, since you seem to know something about this?' I said I'd need help. 'Would you help? Would you be my partner? He said yes. Then we got a third partner, a guy named Winston Fowlkes, who has a financial background."

The three partners' first business venture was an attempt to buy Marvel, which was for sale at auction. They were outbid by Marvel's present owner, Ronald O. Perelman. "That educated me about the financial aspects of corporate America," Shooter notes. "In the course of it, we met quite a few bankers and venture capitalists who, afterwards, invited us to give them a start-up plan. We eventually settled with one of them and put together this business."

> **"I spent all my day upstairs arguing with the financial people and lawyers, trying to protect the creative people from being raped and devoured."**

But just the right people and the right time wasn't enough. There was also the right opportunity. "Right after I left Marvel, Steve and I went to see Richard Bernstein at Western Publishing," Shooter says. "Richard and I had met when Western tried to buy Marvel some years before. He said he was impressed with what he had seen from me and, at our first meeting in 1987, he made a commitment - he said. 'The old Deli/Gold Key comics characters? They're yours. I won't give them to anybody else; when you're ready to publish, let me know'. And he honored that commitment; Marvel wanted the characters, DC wanted them, he got offers from all over. And he turned them down, based on his handshake agreement with me. A couple of years later, when we were ready to start up in business, I called Richard up and said, "Okay, we're ready to go,' and Steve got together with Western's licensing people and made a deal and we had a bank of characters to start with."

Those characters included Magnus, well-remembered by '60's fans for the excellent artwork of Russ Manning; Dr. Solar; Turok, Son of Stone: and a few others. "We poured our hearts into developing those characters, because I feel like I have a debt of honor," Shooter says. "We try to do our best, we'll continue to try to do our best. I think Western is pleased with what we've done. We continue to develop the better properties from the old Gold Key line, as well as come up with our own."

But the relationship between Valiant and Western doesn't end there. Western distributes Valiant's children's book line and its licensed Nintendo and World Wrestling Federation lines as well, giving Valiant a foothold in major mass-marketing chains like *K mart, Woolco, Walmart and Toys R Us.*

New Titles From Valiant...

Memories of the things he felt had gone wrong at Marvel have led Shooter to fashion a certain kind of atmosphere at Valiant's offices—an open, no-doors approach that some say is reminiscent of Marvel's earliest period, the celebrated "bullpen" of the early 1960's.

"I think one of the things that went wrong at Marvel was that I got so far removed from all the creative stuff," Shooter says, "I spent all my day upstairs arguing with the financial people and lawyers, trying to protect the creative people from being raped and devoured. At the end, I was walking around the place and I didn't even know everybody's name, because I delegated too much."

"Everybody hired their own assistants and then the assistants would get promoted and they would hire their own assistants. There were actually people working at Marvel who I didn't even know. The people I hired were Louise Jones and Al Milgrom and Larry Hama and Denny O'Neil and Bob Hall - some people I thought came with a bunch of credentials", he continues. "Toward the end there, as I said, I don't know if those people had credentials or not, because I don't know who they were."

"Too many people go for the quick hit. One of the problems in this business is that's the easy way out. It's very short-term-thinking."

That distance from the creative side of the office led to what Shooter sees as a major misunderstanding of his methods of running a comic-book company. "I was trying to explain a philosophy of comics - which was not at all revolutionary, which I learned from the people who started this business, from Stan Lee - but by the time it got filtered down to the troops, it had become a series of incredibly stupid rules: 'Never do this; always do that'" he remembers. "I never said anything like that. I never said anything like that. And that's one time I'll use the word never.

I would explain why or what the objective was - there are a million

"A lot of publishers are becoming like the Franklin Mint: they're no longer publishers, they're making collectibles - period."

"I think this is a great creative atmosphere. If this is how the old Marvel Bullpen was in the early '60's, that's great."

ways to get there - and I tried to explain things in terms of philosophy. I tried to take what I learned from Stan, what I learned from Jack, what I learned from Mort Weisinger - who was quite a good technician, if not a writer - and try to educate people, give them the basis of understanding to make creative decisions. Then, when it was played back to me later, I would get these insane rules.

"So, when Valiant opened its first place, I made sure I was sitting in the middle of it," he points out. "I like it this way; you hear all the noise in the background here - I like it this way, doesn't bother me; I can concentrate. If I want to go sit in a room with someone, I have conference rooms we can go to and close the door. But I like the idea that Bob Layton can just look up and yell across the room at me. 'Hey, is this guy supposed to be carrying this thing in this panel?'

"I think this is a great creative atmosphere. If this is how the old Marvel Bullpen was in the early '60's, that's great."

As noted earlier, Valiant's relationship with Western Publishing has led to a great success outside the direct market, probably greater than any other "independent" comics publisher has had. And Shooter is proud of that success. "Most of what we've done has been mass-market comics, which no one else is doing," he says. "We started out doing all the Nintendo comics, which did very well for us - and are still doing well to this day. We're selling the material through our Western Publishing distribution channel. And we've got World Wrestling Federation, which we're selling on the newsstand, some direct, and through Western in a children's book format. Those comics are some of the most successful comics ever created, but the direct market doesn't care about them. So they ignore them. They ignore the fact that some of our Mario Brothers comics made more money than the things they think were big hits. The fact that our children's wrestling books will probably

Valiant wants to get its super-hero material out of the direct distribution ghetto and before a larger public.

break a million copies doesn't mean anything in the direct market - they just don't count it.

"I like the idea of getting some comics out there to reach the mass market," Shooter goes on. "I ran into (Marvel President) Terry Stewart at the Frankfort Book Fair and he said, 'I love what you guys are doing. It's going to help all of us.' And I said, 'You're right, because a lot of kids who don't read comics at all will pick up a Voyager WWF book, get interested in comics, go looking for back issues, get themselves into a comic-book store, and suddenly they're buying Spider-Man, Superman, whatever - Magnus, I hope.' I'm bringing in new people and that's something I've always wanted to do. I've always wanted to get something that had marquee value to people who don't read comics already,"

Now, in the direct market, Valiant is attempting to build a base of superhero adventure titles, all linked around the Magnus and Solar properties licensed from Western. "We think the wisest course is to build a base, a superhero universe. It's what I've done for 26 years. Number one; it's what guys like (Vice-President, creative design) Bob Layton and some of the other people who work for us have done. Let's do what we know first and then branch out from there," Shooter says.

That base has expanded in the last several months, with the introductions of Harbinger, X-O Manowar, and RAI. Also forthcoming is a two-book collection of the "Steel Nation" story from Magnus #1-4, including pages that were cut from the original issues due to space considerations; a Turok retrospective, reprinting the work of artist Alberto Gioletti on that Gold Key title, culling the three or four best stories, including the painted covers; a fourth superhero title, Shadowman, written by Steve Englehart and drawn by Dave Lapham; and a prestige format Magnus project by Barry Windsor-Smith.

"We intend to branch out," Shooter interjects. "We have, among our rights, the rights to Little Lulu and other things like that. We'd like to do some of that. We'd like to do comics for little

girls, we'd like to do more and different kinds of young kids comics; and, just like at Marvel, I intend to go and do the Valiant version of Epic Comics - the things that aren't in the 'universe,' but are just neat and we ought to do them. Expand the envelope, experimental stuff."

And when the time is right, Valiant wants to get its superhero material out of the direct distribution ghetto and before a larger public.

"When you think about it, as long as we're working on all these mass market projects, we really have about three times the distribution of Marvel," Shooter argues. "We have the same newsstand distribution - 25-30,000 outlets; the same direct market distribution - about 4,000 outlets; and we have 60,000 mass-market outlets they don't have. We really have a chance - probably more than they do - to change this industry.

We're working right now on repackaging some of the superhero stuff into a format for the mass market. We'd like to build a base there, first. Once the mass market chains are used to getting WWF books from us, Nintendo books from us; once we have permanent fixtures in there in conjunction with Western, once we have a real presence in that market, then we can slip a Magnus Robot Fighter in there. There's no reason we can't succeed.

"Do you have to have a marquee name to succeed? Well, no - a lot of the perennial Western properties are things that are not in the forefront of your mind. Saggy Baggy Elephant is cute, don't get me wrong, but if you asked 100 people on the street if they know Saggy Baggy Elephant, a lot of them won't. Unless you hit the right demographic," Shooter notes. "You can build your market strength to the point where the equity in your name will carry a new property or a less well-known property. I guarantee you people buy a lot of Western material on the strength of the name Golden Books. We want to get to the point where we have that kind of strength in the marketplace. Obviously, we're shooting higher than they are - that's why they want to be our distributor. They own the young kids market; they look at us as people who can bring them the pre-teen market with WWF, and with Nintendo; and the teen-age and adult markets with Magnus and Solar. We can reach all the way up to the baby-boomer demographic. We're trying to take advantage of a marketing channel comics have just been unable or unwilling to attempt and maybe take comics beyond the confines of the direct market - which is pretty small. Pretty small."

But Shooter admits the standard comic-book package of the past 30 years probably will not sell in the mass market. "Right now, in order to make our WWF and Nintendo products fit more easily into these retailers' and chains' thinking, we've put them into the international children's book size; we square-bind them; we've tried to make them 'normal' in as many ways as possible on the outside, since they're comics on the inside, which is unusual form them already. Let's give them only one unusual thing at a time to handle. Ultimately, I think any kind of format will work. The key thing is that the stuff is good...that there's a story worth reading, a story that can be read.

"I don't think people are really focused on the story in comics a lot nowadays.," Shooter complains. "You pick up a lot of comics and flip through them, and they've got some really great foreshortening going on, and rippling muscles - and that's cool; I wish all of our guys could draw like that - but if you try to make sense out of the story, it either doesn't make sense or it's really hard to read, or it's such a little piece of story, you don't really get any satisfaction. People show me certain stuff, saying 'This guy's a great writer' and I'm just blown away: the wordsmithing is wonderful, the dialogue is crisp, the thinking is good - but they take 20 pages and they tell me a tiny part of the first chapter of a story that probably will go on for 20 issues. And a lot of people in a new audience will have no patience for this. The answer is not that it has to be done any certain way; the answer is that you have to make it reader-friendly; if you're going to do a 20-issue story, at least have each one with enough of a bang to make you want to come back for the next one.

"Sometimes, we do these things too much for ourselves; we do them as if the people buying them will buy them no matter what. Maybe that's cool in the direct market - but if you go into a new market, you have a burden of proof," he explains. "You have to make sure it's entertaining enough, that the reader

gets enough of a slice so they say, 'I want this.' We've had chances; Dark Knight had a chance to break through; I admire it greatly - you say something negative about Dark Knight within earshot of a comics fan and you're asking for a lynch mob - except that a civilian, a guy who picked it up in a bookstore who had never read a comic before would have a little trouble understanding it. I tried it - I gave it to my brother-in-law. He read a couple of pages, and didn't get it; he didn't know enough about Batman, he had trouble understanding the pictures sometimes - some stuff we comics fans thought were really neat, he just didn't get. Should Frank Miller not have done those things? No, absolutely not - they were right for the story. But we shouldn't sit around and be amazed that the world didn't embrace this; it wasn't done for them, it was done for us. I hope someday, all the stuff that went with Dark Knight happens with a book my brother-in-law can read."

Is the problem that too many of today's comics professionals come from a fan background? Yes and no. Shooter replies. "I don't think there's anything wrong with having been a fan; I don't think that's a negative in any way. I think there is a little bit of a problem in that there is no education process available. There's no way for a young, talented, eager guy to really learn some of the basic skills. Usually, you send your samples in; if you're good enough to make the cut, they send you a script. There isn't the kind of contact with people who've been around and who can teach things.

"The main problem is that the fans coming up have no opportunity for any other education, so they all repeat mistakes as enthusiastically as they do good stuff. But there's nothing wrong with enthusiasm, with loving what you do."

And Shooter is somewhat down on what he sees as a shortsightedness on the part of comics publishers, distributors and retailers - as evidenced by one-shot "gimmick" marketing concepts. "People buy what they like - if people want to buy the embossed, foil-stamped, multi-cover editions, I can't argue with it. Those things have been successful," he admits. "We want to get attention to - we've done 'value added' stuff, though....adding material to the books, like the extra page for the Solar origin story in each issue.

"Too many people go for the quick hit. One of the problems with this business is that's the easy way out. It's very short-term thinking," Shooter continues. "A lot of publishers are becoming like the Franklin Mint: they're no longer publishers, they're making collectibles - period. How many people bought Spider-Man #1 because they thought it was going to be a great story? The more the industry relies on that end of the market, the more it becomes a question of "how can we make our book the hot collectible this month?' How many more holograms and foil stamps can you do? I'd rather try to get people to read the thing, try to get them interested in the characters and the story, so I'll sell just as many next month when I don't have my trading cards. Gimmicks for gimmick's sake means you sell 4 million of that one issue; meanwhile, monthly sales of your regular titles erode and erode and erode. The numbers for your big gimmick title will look great, but each year the regular books, the meat and potatoes decline.

"You're creating an Emperor's New Clothes situation," Jim Shooter sums up. "Sooner or later, somebody's going to try to sell all those 'hot' titles that everyone already has one of in a bag - and find out they're not worth anything...and then they'll all go buy baseball cards or something. I think that's a landmine in the path of the industry; we're finding our own way to be different. So far it's worked."

From Conan to Solar

By Patrick Daniel O'Neill

From Conan to Solar, with stops at X-Men and Wolverine in between, Barry Windsor-Smith has lent a special flair to dozens of characters. Here, he discusses the nature of his work.

WIZARD: You had pretty much gotten away from doing comic-book material for a long time; then you got back into it. What drew you back into comics?

BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH: I'm not really sure, to be honest. I've always loved the medium. It's been a good long time since I was doing the posters and portfolios...the last piece I published was through Gorblimey Press was a decade ago, I think. In that time, I've done *Machine Man*, a few issues of *X-Men*,...to me it was just sort of dabbling with the industry. At some point—no particular revelation to it—I just decided to do more. There was no real turning point; I just decided that if I was going to keep drawing this stuff, I might as well do more.

Interview with Barry Windsor-Smith

WIZARD: How do you pick and choose what you work on? I assume you're somewhat selective.

WINDSOR-SMITH: How do you pick and choose whether you want beef or chicken for dinner? It's what you fancy doing. That's what it is. I don't have any major reasons or anything. There's really no formula.

WIZARD: Do you prefer to work from a plot as opposed to a full script?

"I've never worked from a full script. Does anybody do that anymore?"

WINDSOR-SMITH: I've never worked from a full script. Does anybody do that anymore? Actually, I think I worked from a full script once on a short story for the now-defunct Warren comics. I'll sometimes work from a plot, sometimes I'll change the plot radically, pissing off the author something awful; sometimes, I just make it up myself.

I think I'd find it hard to work from a full script or a hard-and-fast plot, because I've got so many ideas myself -that I usually inject into the story or scrap the story and start again. Ask Chris Claremont, I'm sure he'll back that up.

WIZARD: Assuming you get a plot you generally like and you're not going to scrap, what's the first thing you look for? What's your first step after looking over the plot?

WINDSOR-SMITH. Sharpening my pencils?

Forgive me, but this seems like very A-B-C sort of stuff.

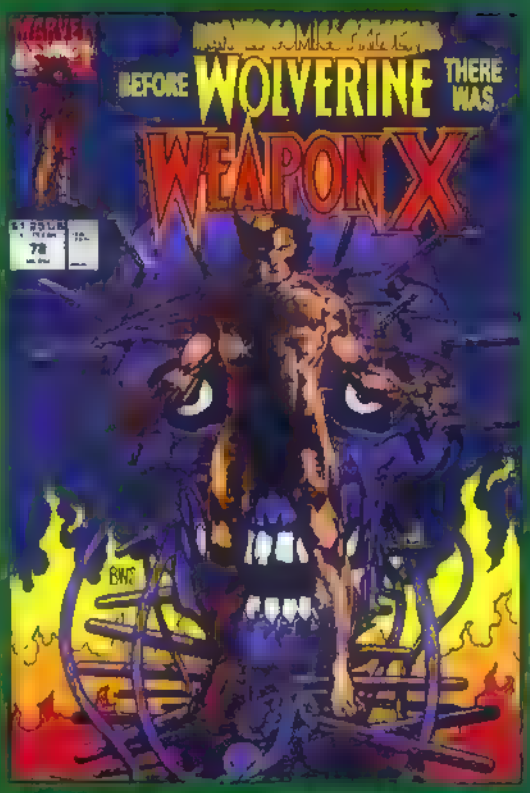
WIZARD: I guess I'm looking for something in terms of process. Do you try to break it down first?

WINDSOR-SMITH: There really is no process. I don't really know how other people work; I don't know if there are processes for people. For me, it's just purely intuitive.

If I get a plot that doesn't need to be reworked or that just needs a minor adjustment here or there—in my opinion—if I understand it entirely and share the vision. I certainly don't break it down. I don't do lit-

tle thumbnails of 20 pages and see if it'll fit. I've been doing this for a heck of a long time—25 years or so—so I just intuitively go ahead and know what I want out of it.

This often results in my drawing and redrawing pages over and over again. It might actually be sensible to break it down and see where everything fits. When I was doing *Conan*, a long, long time ago, I would sometimes do that, because of the limited space and complicated stories and imagery.



"Bob is a great seller of ideas and he can get a dead person excited."

I don't like to be so constricted; I like things to be a surprise, for a start. I like to run intuitively with a story; which will often mean diversions from the original plot—or at least the original plot. When I get to work in the morning, I don't like to know exactly what I'm going to be doing. I like to keep everything open. If I sense a lack of logic in the action, I'll change it to suit my own logic of which I think the characters should do.

The key word here is intuitive; I just do it as it seems right to me.

I sort of joke about it, but I'm sure I've upset a few plotters in my time. There is logic to what other people do, too; but it's one of my problems that if it doesn't fit my logic I don't want to do it.

WIZARD: What brought you to Valiant?

WINDSOR-SMITH: Several things.

I've always been good friends with Bob Layton. Bob had mentioned this new company Jim Shooter was putting together and he was very excited about it. Bob is a great seller of ideas and he can get a dead person excited. He certainly got me excited. He said it was a small company, for the time being, and it's open to experimentation.

Jim called me up a couple of times, we got together a few times, he told me some of the ideas he had. I've always liked Jim's plotting concepts. I always liked his series for Marvel, *The Star Brand*. I liked the cleanness of the idea and the logic behind it. He thinks in not dissimilar ways from me—if you've got

a guy who can fly, that doesn't mean he'll strike a great pose when he does it... or that he knows how to get to Washington. He has to go up a certain amount and follow the roads, or he'll get lost. That's an original take on the very old concept of somebody flying.

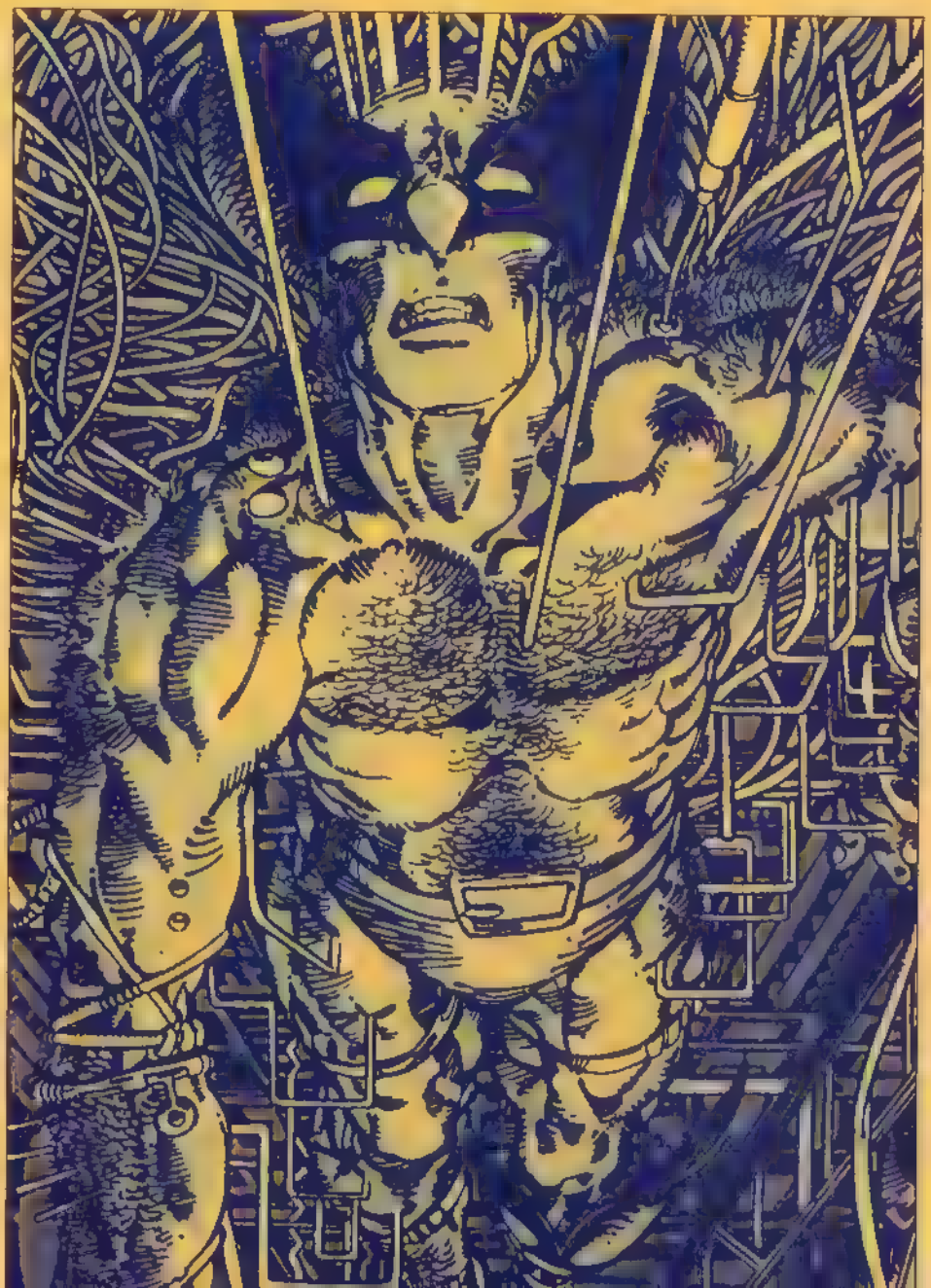
We talked about the Solar origin story, which I found fresh and original, even given the fact that it's a bloody old character and a superhero. Here we have many masters of the art—and some less than masters—doing things that free themselves of the superhero concept, but this was a fresh look at the idea. Heaven knows you have to step away from superheroes., it's so trite and hackneyed.

Once we sorted out the process of making the story—since it was impossible for me to take on this 60-page story as a single project—making it six-page segments, we ran with it. I'm on chapter seven now.

WIZARD: Any plans for other Valiant projects?

WINDSOR-SMITH: A few, but nothing hard and fast right now.

Everybody's tumbling along at such a breakneck speed at Valiant. I was talking with Bob a few minutes ago and he's doing 15 things at once. I live 100 miles away from the offices. I don't get there enough. We keep talking about getting together and planning things—but we haven't done it yet.



X-FACTS ABOUT ART

Larry Stroman discusses comics, working methods, and writer-artists.

WIZARD: Where did you get your art training?

LARRY STROMAN: No place in particular. A little bit of here, there and everywhere. I took some courses at various schools and probably spent half my life hanging around various museums and libraries.

WIZARD: The first place I remember seeing your work was Alien Legion. What had you done before that?

STROMAN: I don't remember much of what I did before that. The very first thing I had published was a two-part World's Finest story—I don't even remember which issues—and then I did backups in American Flagg! That only lasted a few issues. Alien Legion came not too long after that.

WIZARD: Were you interest in comics as a kid, or is this a field you found your way into later on?

STROMAN: I had always been interest in comics, but I wasn't really able to afford them until I was around 12 years old. Before that, I would read the books my brother gave me or that friends would lend me. But I didn't really get into it until 12 or 13

WIZARD: When you started aiming yourself at a career as an artist, was it with the goal of becoming a comics artist—or did you have other things in mind?

STROMAN: It was definitely to be a comics artist. I became sidetracked by a lot of other stuff-architecture, for one—and I eventually ended up making a living as a draftsman for a couple of years. Then I came to New York and did portraits for two years. Then I got into comics...almost by accident.

WIZARD: When you first get a plot or script from a writer, what's the first thing you do?

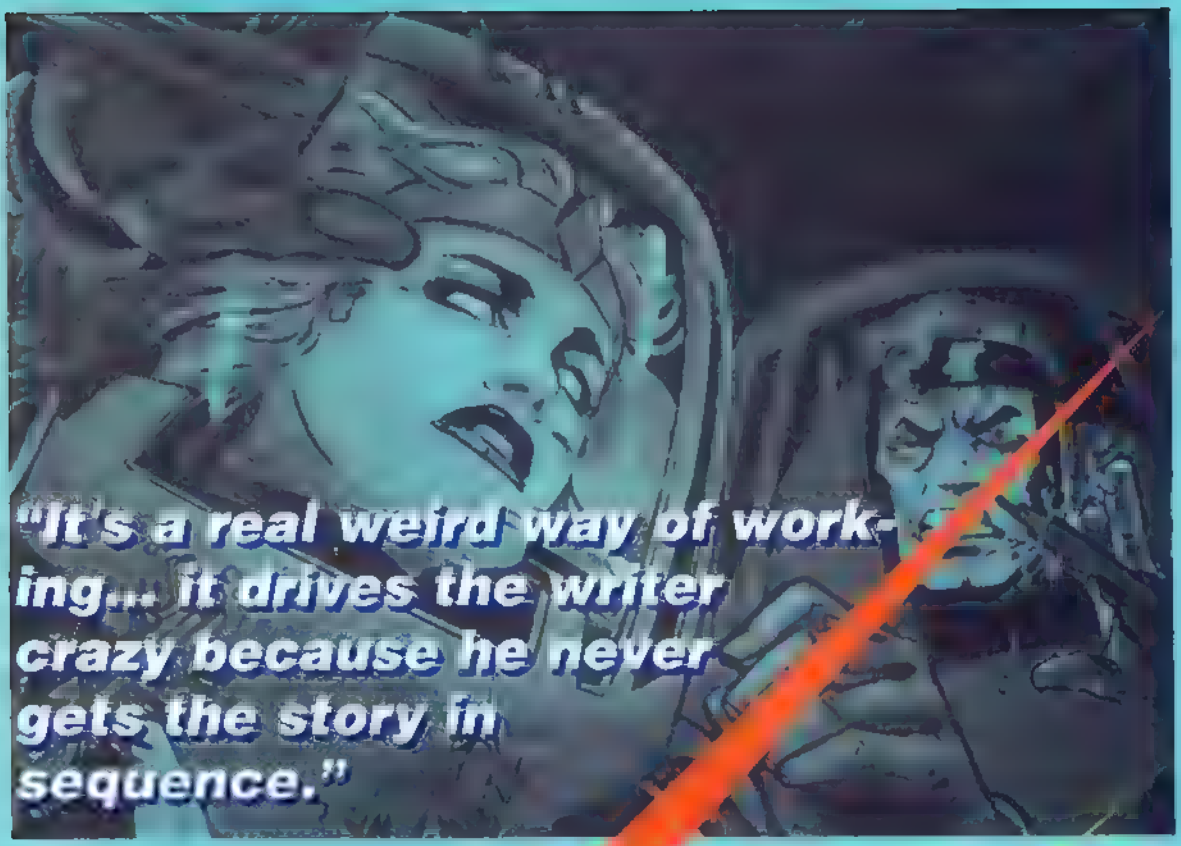
Artist Larry Stroman

STROMAN: Get the first page done Then the last page That's how I usually do it. Why I don't know—I think it's because nothing comes before the first page and nothing comes after the last one. It's always hard to finish the last couple of pages of a story You've been working on it for a few weeks and when you get down to the last few pages, it's often a big struggle trying to finish those last pages. So, I've learned to get those done early...then fill in the in-between.

It's a real weird way of working...it drives editors crazy, it drives the writer crazy, because he never gets the story in sequence.

WIZARD: How do you deal with the packing of the story? Aren't you forcing yourself to make sure that everything comes out to where you began that final page?

STROMAN: I do thumbnails for the whole story first. A lot of people can just start on the first page, start drawing and come out right at the end, but that means you might be focusing on the stuff you like to draw and forcing the other stuff into too



tight a space

WIZARD: How did it feel coming onto a book like X Factor where the characters' visual appearance is pretty well established, not allowing you the chance to do a new 'take' on the way they look?

STROMAN: That's what I did anyway. The reason this book was so attractive is that I could do that. They told me I was getting a group of characters that had been largely ignored in the past and gave me carte blanche on their costumes and appearances.

It's almost like starting a whole new book.

WIZARD: Do you prefer plot or full script?

STROMAN: Plot, definitely plot It gives the artist a chance to do his own packing.

A lot of the time, when writers do full scripts, they don't consider that someone has to draw the image they've described so you wind up with a lot more visual information than can comfortably fit in the pages allotted

With a plot first, the artist can determine how many images you want on a page.

WIZARD: Several people have commented that, in the first few issues of the David/Stroman X Factor, there has not been a whole lot of the typical Marvel slugfest action Is that a problem for you as an artist or do you enjoy working on this more relaxed level?

STROMAN: That was one of the most attractive things about the book, that it didn't start off as books normally do—with everybody fighting. We started with the new characters establishing themselves.

With most comics, you could go 6 to 12 issues before you have enough information about any of the characters to know who they are. X-Factor starts off with the information, then leads up to the fighting.

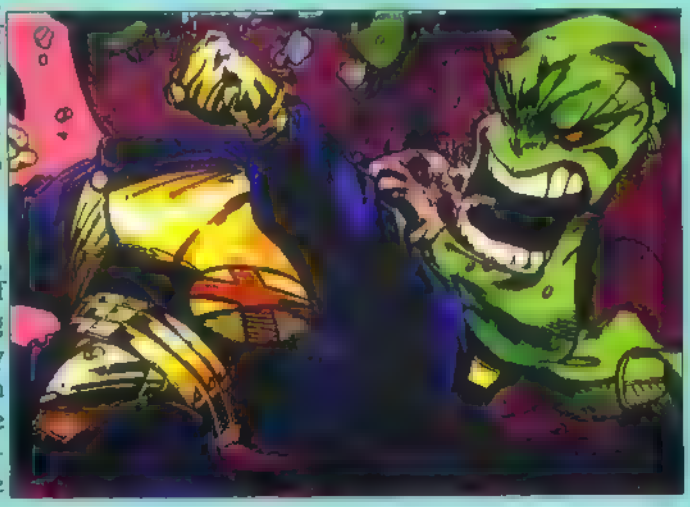
WIZARD: This is beginning to sound like you are an artist with some real thoughts about the kinds of stories that comics can tell Do you have anything in particular that you would like to do as a story somewhere along the line?

STROMAN: Not necessarily I've enjoyed a lot of

the stories I've been given so far. Working with the various writers has been good, because they all have different approaches to stories

WIZARD: Have you any thoughts about writing yourself?

STROMAN: I've never really enjoyed writing. I may do it at some point...but I haven't seen too many examples of artists-turned-writers who really did very good writing anyway. I think you should focus on whatever it is you're good at. If you want to become a writer, you have to realize you're sacrificing something to do that additional work.



At the same time, the reason a lot of artists turn to writing is because they aren't satisfied with the stories they're getting from the writers. In that case, the writers should pay more attention to the work the artists put into the book.

WIZARD: Have you ever worked with a writer who supplied thumbnails of his own?

STROMAN: Mike Baron's the only one who's ever done that. It never made any difference to me...since I'm going to re-do it myself

Different people work different ways; some like being given as much information as possible, others want a minimum of information to work with

WIZARD: Looking at the range of characters and material being published in comics today, is there anything in particular you can point to and say, "I'd really like to do something like that"?

STROMAN: Eventually, I figure I'll do all the genres—I'm doing a science fiction book and a superhero book, now. What the next thing will be, I don't know. In the meantime, I just try to have fun—to learn and expand and get what I can out of every project.

I don't have any particular type of book I'd like to do.

WIZARD: Any colleagues whose work you particularly admire?

STROMAN: Javier Saltares—I not only admire him as an artist, but he's a good friend; Mark Texeria—who I think is doing a great job on Ghost Rider; Denys Cowan; and a friend who just recently got into comics, Chuck Frazier. Also Keith Williams, Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez, and lots of other people.

WIZARD: That's a fairly eclectic range of people.

STROMAN: Yeah—but that's my taste. People do find it unusual that I have never focussed on one particular artist. If you were to ask me the same question a year from now, you'd probably get a completely different answer. I went through my phases with all the various big-time artists in the business...now it's just whoever I think is doing good work right now.

WIZARD: When you're looking at an artist's work, what is it that strikes you? Is it the "surface" elements—the inking, the rendering —or is it the underlying draftsmanship and storytelling?

STROMAN: With each person it's different. Some people are good at design, some people are good at architecture, some people are good at character or costume design. Usually I admire a person for whatever his strong point is.

That's why I've never really had a favorite artist.

WIZARD: To close this out, where do you see yourself in five years? Where will Larry Stroman be in 1997?

STROMAN: I have no idea.

WIZARD: Where would Larry Stroman like to be in 1997?

STROMAN: I don't know. Hopefully, by that time, I'll have done my own comics, and been able to work with other writers whose work I admire. I just hope to continue to be a comics artist and better than I am now.

On The Road To

Self-Publishing Success With Dave Sim, Creator of

CEREBUS

By Tom Palmer, Jr

Dave Sim is one of a handful of self-publishers who have continually published their own work While others of his kind have sought support from larger companies like Tundra, Sim has upheld his principles and his beliefs through dips in circulation and disputes with distributors and retailers. The one title that Sim publishes under his Aardvark-Vanaheim company is Cerebus, a black and white comic that is, in a sense, a serialization of a larger story. Every month, Sim publishes twenty pages of a projected 6000 page story that chronicles the life of a small, gray aardvark named Cerebus.

Cerebus began in late 1977, when Dave Sim, with the help of his then girlfriend and later ex-wife, Deni Loubert, decided to publish a comic for a few issues to gather material to show other companies. The book, at the time, was a parody of Conan, with Sim's art greatly influenced by the work of Barry Windsor-Smith. With its blend of humor and sword and sorcery, the comic caught on within a few issues. As the series progressed, Cerebus eventually moved away from its roots to tackle more serious subjects while retaining its sense of humor. Sim's art style began to evolve as well, due to his drawing on other artists for inspiration. By its twenty-sixth issue, the comic started a story of political power called High Society that would run until the fiftieth issue. This storyline, with its tightly woven plot, threads and political intrigue, marked a departure from the direct parody of the earlier issues.

After High Society, Sim began work on a sixty issue mammoth entitled Church and State, which included, among other things, Cerebus as Pope, Cerebus' marriage, and a trip to the moon. Jaka's Story, the next novel, was a conscious effort to avoid the complicated storylines of the previous novels in favor of a more character-orientated story. This held true for the following novel, Melmoth, which concerned the death of Sim's Oscar Wilde character. Last October, Sim began the current novel, Mothers and Daughters, returning to the involved plot twists of earlier issues.

The writing of the initial stories was in the normal comic book style, but Sim soon adopted a different approach to writing. Instead of summarizing events in expository captions, Sim opts to show what takes place over an extended period of time. For this reason, the length of stories in Cerebus is measured in years instead of months. Sim's unique method of telling stories places

Recommended Reading

Cerebus has been published monthly since 1977 and will continue until the 300th issue in 2004. The stories have been presented in a variety of formats.

The monthly comic: Recent issues are relatively easy to find, but early issues are both rare and expensive. If you are interested in the entire story, there are other means of obtaining all of the issues. In addition to the regular story, each new issue contains, on the average, ten pages of letters, and occasionally a preview of work from other self-published artist. To help new readers and to refresh the minds of the regular readers, Sim recently published a special edition that recapped the first 150 issues in one comic. This should be available for free from your local dealer.

Bi-weekly reprints: Every other week, an older issue of Cerebus is reprinted. Currently, Sim is in the middle of reprinting the Church and State storyline. These reprints are affordable and contain the original covers and letters pages as well as excerpts from Sim's notebooks and Single Pages highlighting some of the best in small press comics. There are reprints available for the first two storylines as well.

Swords of Cerebus: Six volumes were published reprinting the first twenty-five issues. They are hard to find, but contain introductions by Sim as well as new covers and back-up features.

Reprint volumes: These phone-book sized graphic novels collect the entire storylines. To date, there are six volumes, each gathering the complete story from start to finish. The covers, letters pages, and in-between issues are not reprinted, making these books more cohesive. Sim plans to keep these books in print for the duration of the series and to add all of the remaining stories to the collection as they are completed.

Cerebus - reprints the first twenty five issues

High Society - reprints from issue 26 to issue 50

Church and State volume I - reprints the first half of the story, from issues 52 to 80

Church and State volume II - collects the second half of the story, from issues 81 to 111

Jaka's Story - reprints issues 114 to 136

Melmoth - collects issues 139 to 15-

Other self-published artists mentioned in this article:

Hepcats, published by Double Diamond Press

Tundra co-publishes with a variety of self-published artists. These include

From Hell and Big Numbers from Alan Moore's Mad Love Publishing

Taboo from Steve Bissette's Spiderbaby Grafix and Publications

The One, Bratpack, and other titles from Rich Vietch's King Hell Press

more importance on the facial expressions and body language of his characters. However, there is still a good deal of writing in each issue of Cerebus. There are occasional illustrated text pieces that are used to show different characters' viewpoints or to break the pattern of sometimes wordless pages.

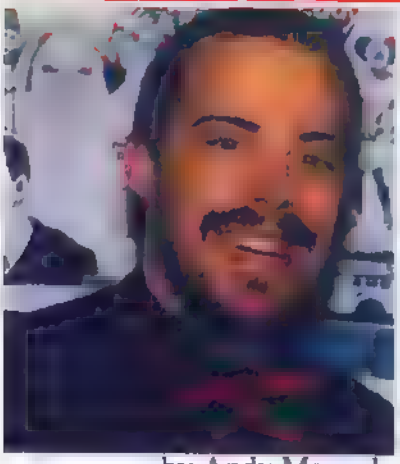
With the emphasis on the interaction between characters, setting plays an important part in Cerebus. Helping Sim on the backgrounds is Gerhard, his collaborator on the regular comic since 1984. Unlike most background artists, Gerhard pencils and inks what he illustrates, ensuring that his backgrounds are accurate and highly detailed. To add to the realism of the surroundings in Cerebus, Gerhard draws up floorplans of the locations, and sometimes builds carboard models of the buildings in the book. These extremely accurate diagrams show the place of furniture and props and even indicate the location of the sun in relation to the building.

To celebrate the recent publication of the halfway point in

the halfway point in the 300 issue series, Sim is undertaking a tour of the United States. Beginning in January and apparently lasting throughout the year, the tour will include Sunday appearances in twenty-one different cities. At each stop, Sim promises to include many surprises aside from the usual signings, such as original artwork and special Cerebus merchandise.

When Cerebus began in 1977, at the start of the direct market, self-publishing was a favorable alternative to the larger companies. Today, as the marketplace is continually changing, there is more risk involved in publishing without the support of other companies. Today, as the marketplace is continually changing, there is more risk involved in publishing without the support of other companies. Aside from Cerebus, there are very few self-published comics that have survived for more than a few issues. Comics that are entirely self published, like Hepcats by Martin Wagner, barely survive because they depend on a core group of fans. Other more well-known artists like Alan Moore, Rick Veitch, and Steve Bissette have allowed their smaller companies to merge with larger ones such as Tundra. Needles to say, these comics need your support, otherwise the option to self-publish will no longer be viable to both new and already established artists.

X-MEN THE MOTION PICTURE



by Andy Mangels

Marvel's hottest mutants may finally be on their way to the big screen, but not without stumbling blocks. Carolco has optioned the rights to the *X-Men* and *Wolverine* for use in a feature film. James (*Terminator 2*) Cameron's Lightstorm Entertainment may produce the film, if Carolco survives its current money problems. If Carolco goes bankrupt, they may be absorbed by Cinergi, but *X-Men* co-creator Stan Lee says he'll have no problem finding the un-merry mutants another film home.

This film script for *Wolverine and the X-Men* was written by Gary Goldman, and turned in on June 18, 1991. Currently, developers are not happy with the script and are calling for a re-write. Whether or not Goldman will stay on the screenplay, or if any of his ideas are used, will be a topic for the future

Pretty young Kitty Pryde has only just discovered her phasing power when she's recruited by Jean Grey and Charles Xavier to attend the Xavier School for Gifted Youngsters. There, she meets Scott Summers, Jason Wyngarde, and a mysterious hairy man called Wolverine Seeing little bits of evidence something strange is going on, it isn't long before Kitty stumbles on the blue-furred Kurt Wagner and finds out what really goes on at the school.

Though at first reluctant to work with Xavier and his mutants, Kitty wants to learn how to control her phasing powers, so she stays. In a practice session in the Danger Room, Kitty sees that there's some chemistry between Jean/Marvel Girl and Scott/Cyclops and learns that Jason Wyngarde/Master mind is not a tremendously nice individual

She's not the only one who notices Jason's not cool. Wolverine and Professor X worry something may be wrong, but not before political orator Thomas Prince and his Citizen's Crusade blow into town to speak. Prince's words bespeak an Aryan attitude, urging the people that only the strong survive. At a pre-speech protest, Prince witnesses the covert actions of the X-Men against his Citizen bodyguards and the ultra-strong Atalanta, his black, female second-in-command. After the rally, Prince urges Xavier and the X-Men to join him; his political ambitions reach further than one might suspect. He and Atalanta are mutants as well! Xavier tells him no, but Jason Wyngarde seems interested.

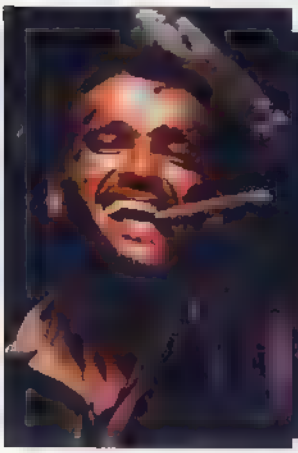
That evening, Jason uses his powers to trick Jean into almost sleeping with him. Discovered and in trouble, he leaves the X-Men and goes to see Prince, owner of Prince Metalworks. As we now find out, Prince is a master of magnetism (though he's never called Magneto). Atalanta is a super-strong woman, able to bench-press tons and leap great distances. Using flattery, Prince is soon able to add Jason to his team.

The next day, utilizing Jason's powers, Prince makes it appear that Xavier and the X-Men destroy most of the churches in the (unnamed) city, proclaiming the rise of the Homo Superior...and of the X-Men! That night, the real X-Men are attacked on the street, and must battle for their lives against first real Citizens, and then Prince's Citizens and Atalanta

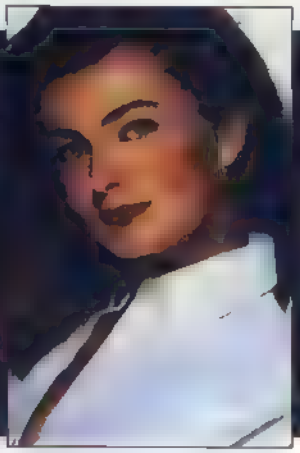
After a protracted battle in the

Marvel's X-Men will soon hit the big screen.

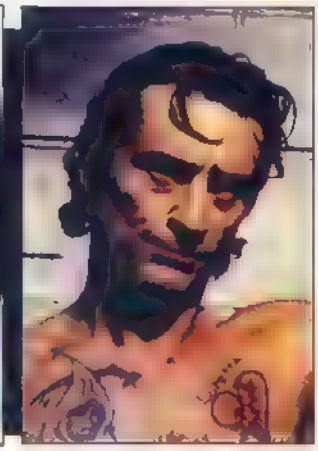
Are these the perfect people to play the X-Men? We think so. Now only if Marvel could afford them.



Arnold Schwarzenegger's got the look and the accent to play the perfect Colossus.



Who better to play Psylocke than Paulina, the hottest super-model in the world?



Not only is Robert DeNiro one of the best actors around, but he actually looks like Wolverine.

mansion, the X-Men are captured, except Wolverine (who gets away. Why don't they go after him?) and Kitty. Prince exposes the X-Men to the world in a news conference, while Wolverine and Kitty go off to get the Angel, an ex-X-Men member. He's not the Angel we know. Oh, he's Warren Worthington III, but he's got a wife, Amy, and a child, Gabriel. He's also had surgery to remove his wings. He's useless to them now (and useless to the script, completely. The scene just screams "Edit").

Nothing seems to help when Kitty and Wolverine break into Prince's compound. Kitty is captured and Wolverine is killed when Prince magnetically collapses his skeleton into itself. Soon, the X-Men are put on trial and found guilty of the murder of the people who died in the church raids. Jason intercepts on their behalf, sad over Wolverine's death (who was the only one with whom he got along). Prince puts them in a moral dilemma they can cause an innocent man's death or be killed. They make the right choice, inspiring Jason too late. Prince kills him.

On the day of the execution, Wolverine's healing power has finally done its work. He digs his way out of his grave, ready to fight. He heads to the execution grounds, the biggest media event since Liz Taylor's wedding. He must fight Atalanta to the death, blanking out the power and stopping the electrocution of the X-Men as he does so. He frees the X-Men, and together they expose Prince as a mutant before the press of the world. In a spectacular battle the X-Men fight off Prince, but it's going to be a battle to the death. Who dies? And how will the public react to the X-Men now?

It's easy to see why the *Wolverine and the X-Men* script didn't work for Carolco. It captures only traces of the verve that Claremont and Byrne's work on the title had. The character's are all little more than cyphers, and most of them use their powers poorly when needed.

Logic is also stretched incredibly. Kitty's decision to go to the school is not influenced by parents; they're mentioned once she's been sentenced, but never seen. There's no outcry when Prince's Citizens are beating protesters at the beginning The trial of the X-Men and death-by-electrocution storyline is so silly and poorly conceived, a six-year-old could spot the legal problems.

The public's perception's of mutants is pretty radical, given that the story takes place across

weeks at the most. There's no hue and cry to study the mutants' powers by the government (which already knows about Wolverine, according to a quick origin recap) or scientists. In fact, because it's never demonstrated, there's no proof to the public that these really *are* mutants or that they *have* any powers

Perhaps the best scene occurs when Xavier is counselled by his lawyer about the fallibility of the "mutant defense" in court. "I didn't do it, your honor. There was an evil mutant who made the witness think it was me", he chides Xavier. This scene shows how ridiculous the total suspension of belief this script requires is.

Wolverine and the X-Men would be best served exploring more of the characters in either a less-public situation, or in a very public situation. As it is, Goldman tries to establish too much in the script—not only each of the characters, but the presence of mutants in general. Much better to show a world in which the presence of mutants in a known quantity, thus leading to either celebrity status, bigotry, or both. A moviegoing public which gives homage to such celebrity freaks as Michael Jackson yet reviles their neighbors who may be too "different" (in race, sexual orientation, or handicap) would be just the audience for an *X-Men* movie which incorporated those themes.

Hope you enjoyed this column. In a future column, I'd like to answer your questions about super-hero movies and TV shows, both from the past, present and future. Write in and ask something, and I'll do my best to answer it.

Next month we'll take a look at what those pesky Aliens are up to as we take a look at several different scripts for *Aliens III*. We'll see you then, right here at *Hollywood Heroes!*

A scene from the X-Men pilot, *Pryde of the X-Men*.

X-Men in the past

Though they've only enjoyed one half-hour pilot, the Uncanny X-Men have been all over the small screen since their introduction into comics. Here is a listing of *X-Men* appearances on television.

Marvel Super-Heroes: Sub-Mariner (1965) "Dr. Doom's Day" was a three-part episode adapted from *Fantastic Four #6* and *FF Annual #3*. The animators, Grantray-Lawrence, could not use the Fantastic Four as they had their own cartoon series at the time, so they substituted the fairly new characters of the X-Men in their place. This cartoon is available on the *Marvel Comics: Sub-Mariner* tape from Best Film & Video, at video and convenience stores near you.

The New Fantastic Four (1978) In "The Menace of Magneto", the Fantastic Four fight against the master of magnetism.

Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends (1981-83) Though Iceman was in every episode, so was Firestar (later integrated into the Marvel Universe in *New Mutants* and now *New Warriors*), many episodes guest-starred the X-Men. Among them were:
"Sunfire" (#4), Sunfire joins the heroes against his evil uncle.
"Prison Plot" (#8), as Magneto gains control of New York.
"Origin of the Iceman" (#16), as Iceman trains with the X-Men in the early days of the team.
"A Firestar is Born" (#18), as Firestar goes to an X-Men Reunion and reveals how she first met and joined the team.
"The X-Men Adventure" (#30), in which the Spider-Friends and the X-Men must join together to defeat a cyborg who's gained control of the mansion.

Spider-Man (1981) Spidey fights solo against the X-Men's favorite villain in "When Magneto Speaks, People Listen".

X-Factor Promotional Video (1987) This 20-minute video by Marvel pre-dated the *X-Factor* series and was only seen in comic stores and at conventions. It featured interviews with Bob Layton, Jackson Guice, Jim Shooter, Mike Carlin, and others, about the upcoming series and the "mysterious" female member

The Uncanny X-Man (1989) This half hour pilot, "Pryde of the X-Men", was produced by Marvel Productions in the hopes of selling a series. It didn't sell, and the cartoon went on the shelf It was shown as part of the *Marvel Universe* syndicated show, and released on video in 1990.

X-Men Action Figure Commercial (1991)

Breakin'

A Career In Comics:

Crazy Dream or Sick Obsession?

By Nat Gertler

Let's say that you like comic books (not a

wild supposition, considering that you just plunked down $2.95 for a magazine about comics). You enjoy reading them, collecting them, and even enjoy the blotches of ink that stay on your fingers after a long reading schedule. At some point, you may realize "Hey, people make a living off of producing these things! Could I"?

Maybe you could. Hundreds do. But that doesn't mean you should. Breaking into comics is very difficult, and even after you establish yourself, it is a rough business. You can be hotter than the Ghost Rider one year, and then a few years later find getting work as tough as Superman juggling Kryptonite. To make a living, you have to put up with long hours, difficult assignments, unreasonable collaborators, poor benefits, tight deadlines, and working at home, alone.

(As I am writing this article, I just got a call from a publisher who is cancelling a line of comics that I've been working on. Instantly, my income is cut in half. Tough field.)

If you really want to work in comics, there are many careers other than those on the creative end. Far more people work selling comics, distributing comics, or being accountants, marketing specialists, or secretaries for the publishers than write and draw the books.

a publisher... is cancelling a line of comics that I've been working on. Instantly, my income is cut in half. *Tough field.*

Have I scared you off yet? No? Good. If you get discouraged that easily, you'll never make it in comics. For some it's better to be scared off early, rather than facing all of the frustrations to come.

You have to have the resolve to succeed. Once you have that, you have to make the effort to break in. There are standard steps towards breaking into comics.

TIP # 1

1.Learn your skill;

This involves a lot more than just looking at comic books and copying what you see there. Writers should take English classes, writing classes, study literature, and study life. Artists (including not only pencilers, but also inkers, letterers and colorists) need art training, beyond the high-school level. There are a

Far more people work selling comics, distributing comics, or being accountants, marketing specialists, or secretaries for the publishers than write and draw the books.

plethora of art schools out there, including ones that have programs aimed at the comic-book artist.

As with anything else, experience is the best teacher, so in addition to your classes, you have to practice, practice, practice!

TIP # 2

2. Learn the other skill;

A writer has to have an artistic sense. He has to be able to describe effective visual images to the artist. He has to know that you can't fit a dozen panels with 10 characters and five word balloons onto a single page. He has to be able to pace stories visually, cinematically. At times, the comic-book writer will be called on to actually lay out some of the comic books he writes, doing very simple sketches of every page, every panel. He doesn't need to be able to draw like an artist, but he has to think like one.

The penciler, on the other hand, has to be able to do more than just draw pretty pictures. He has to be able to tell a story with those pictures, to convey story information, to understand what the writer is trying to do and use the art to enhance that story.

If you can both write and draw well, you have an advantage. There is a lot of opportunity out there for the next Frank Miller or Paul Chadwick. (Unfortunately, the popularity of writer/artists has reach the point where artists with little writing ability get to write their own work, turning out comics that are pretty but don't do a good job of telling an interesting story).

TIP # 3

3. Make some samples;

You need something that you can show editors to indicate the quality of your work. Writers should have comics plots and sample pages of comics scripts. Do not include prose short stories, poems, or other things that are not comics.

Similarly, artists should be able to show pages of comic-book stories. Samples of pin-up art won't impress an editor. The pages should include

The penciler... has to be able to do more than just draw pretty pictures. He has to be able to tell a story with those pictures.

not just fight scenes, but scenes of people wailing and talking, establishing shots, and anything else that a comic book is likely to need. inkers should have samples of work they've inked, with photocopies of the un-inked pencils. Letterers should have lettering samples, and colorists coloring samples.

You should find a partner with whom you can create fan-zines, cheap pre-professional comics. This gives the writer and artist usable samples, while helping them polish their craft. They can also be a lot of fun, and occasionally even profitable.

TIP # 4

4. Sell yourself;

Once you have your samples, you have to show them to editors, to get them interested in you. Artists have an easier time of this than writers do, as an artist can easily show his work to editors at conventions. An artist's contribution is much easier to judge quickly.

Writers submit story proposals to the editors, aimed at specific books. They can also propose a new series, although this works better with smaller companies than with the larger ones. These are best submitted through the mail, as editors just don't have the time at conventions to read proposals. However, it is still a good idea for writers to make themselves known to editors at conventions.

These are the textbook ways of making your first sale, and frankly, the first sale actually rarely comes quite this way. There is usually some special variation or unique circumstance that gives a creator his first break. However, these usually happen while you're working hard on the standard route, as an unexpected side effect of that effort. Be prepared to take advantage of the unexpected opportunity.

So, if you really feel the need to work in comics, good luck—and get to work!

Nat Gertler first broke into the comics field three years ago, and has since written comics for a half dozen different publishers.

FIRST CLASS COVER:
TONY CORSO

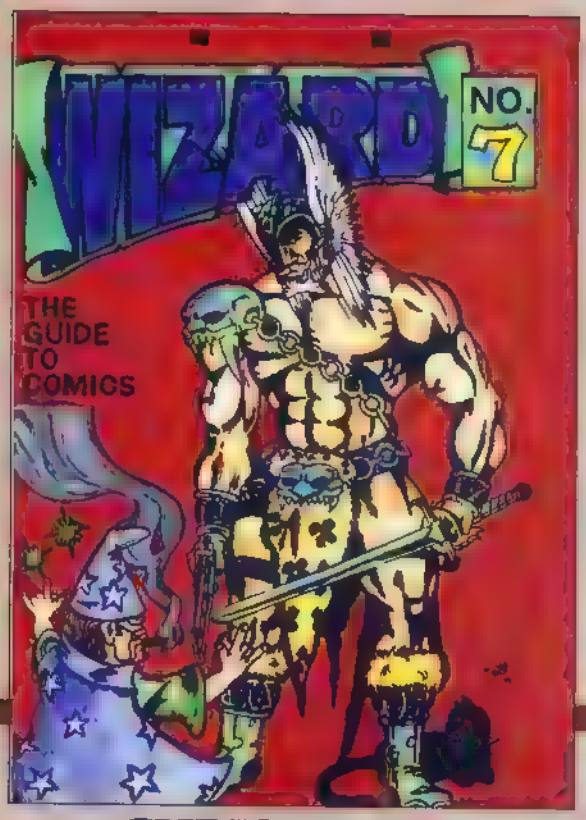
YARDLEY, PA

AMAZING FUTURE ARTISTS

In Wizard #4, we ran a contest to "Draw Your Own Wizard Cover". Needless to say, the response has been tremendous. Because of all your cooperation, we will make this feature a regular in every issue of Wizard from now on. If you don't see your cover appear this issue, that doesn't mean it won't appear in a future issue. Here, we have shown a nice array spanning all the ages. We truly appreciate all the time you spent. So stay tuned, you might be next.

LEWIS JAMES
BROOKLYN, NY

MIKE LEONARD
RIVER FALLS, WI



CHRIS BENDT

AUBURN, WA

MIGUEL QUINONES

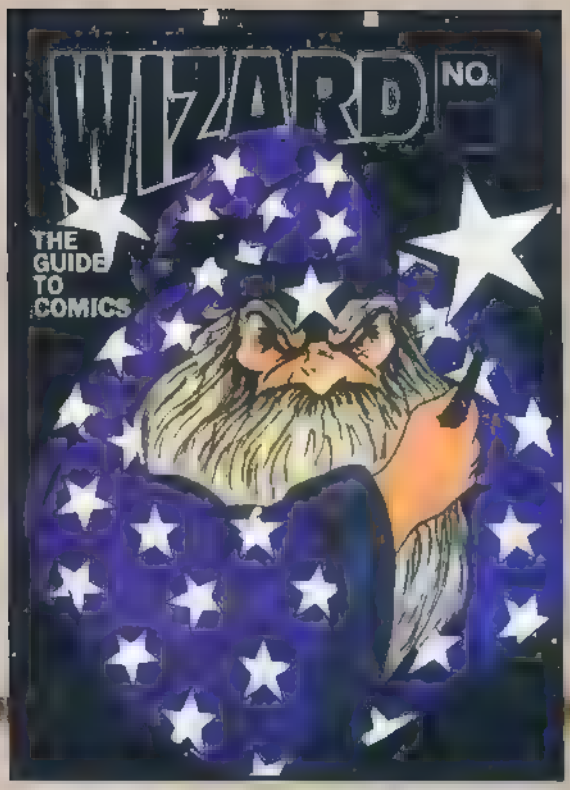
AMSTERDAM, NY

DWIGHT DUFRENE

PARADIS, CA

CHRIS BESAW

PORT ORANGE, FL



TOM ARATO

SYOSSET, NY

TOM LI

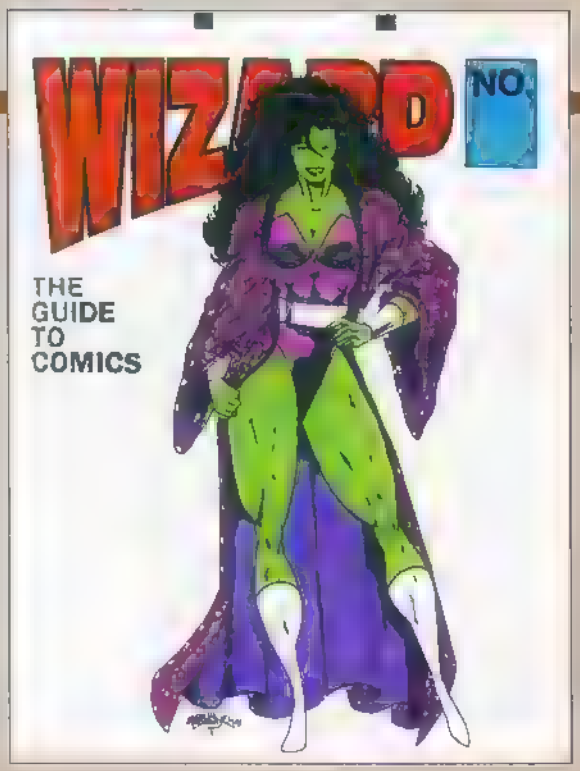
NEW YORK, NY

BOBBY RAE

WOBURN, MA

HECTOR HERNANDEZ

NEW YORK, NY

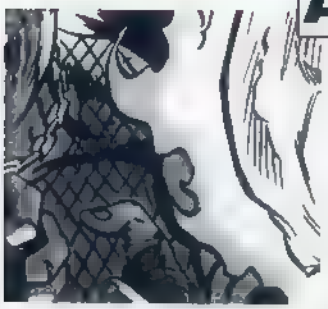


COVER SHOTS

Answers on Page 141

HOW WELL DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR COVERS?

Below, you will find six pieces from covers published over the last year. Can you tell what covers they are from?


A

B

C

D

E

F

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WIZARD WORD SEARCH

Answers on page 141

How good are you eyes? Try to find all of the following words that are hidden in the Wizard puzzle. After you find all the words, all the unused letters will form a code. Try to break it! The words appear horizontal, vertical, diagnal, backwards, and every other combination. Good Luck!

Longshot
Wolverine
Archangel
Magnus
Red Raven
Wolfsbane
Judge Dredd
Sauron
Wizard
Ghost Rider
Concrete
X-Man
Transformers
G.I. Joe
Bishop
Machine Man
Pyro
Toad
Blob
Rai
Cable
Solar
Hulk
Storm
Lobo
Nova
L-Ron
Gambit
Cloak
Venom
Robin
Hawk
Dove
Mojo
Havok
Guido
Lockheed
Blackbird
Redwing
Sentinel
Red Wolf
American Eagle
Timber Wolf
Lar Gand
Spider-Man
Mary Jane
Electro
Harbinger
Iron Man
Wonder Woman
Thor
Odin
Loki
Groo
Ron Lim
Dragon Lance
Spell Jammer
Terminator
Predator
Darth Vader
Storm Trooper
Han Solo
Jawa
Red Sonja
Death Star
Kirk
Spock

```
LRONAJNOSDERKWAHSPIDERMANAKI
SKDBHISPELLJAMMERORYPALGROOA
OAREOAOTSNAMNORIVLETCHICVDER
RWUIELRTOCENABSFLOWHIKHAIZTO
AOGRKHOBLRLKLUHERSIDOAHUIEEB
DTHAORKLIAMODINECNALNOGARDTI
AOOTMNVCGNRTAIETEACGNMTMHEEN
RHESWBANOSGGRKIMZHEAOAIOWSRE
TSOHRNIFDLUEAOABTLINBNMJIECV
HGJTEWLTLOVNRNOVAOEVALBOZNNA
VNIADOESOLARGLDPNVATPREDATOR
AOGEWTHPOHSIBAEAEVODWIRZRICD
DLRDAJAWARDLNAMOWREDNOWODNVE
ELECTROVRILDOXEREDIRTSOHGETR
RRHEWJUDGEDREDDDRIBKCALBILZI
RONLIMARYJANEARDSREMROFSNART
```

WORD JUMBLE

Answers on page 141

Do you know your stuff? I mean really know your stuff? The below jumbles, when properly scrambled, form comic related words. Example: RODDOM

D R D O O M

1) TEELUBEBLE
2) MAPSUNER
3) RATKREST
4) HOWTADSAC
5) RIPEMOISTPUM
6) MEGODEAR
7) RAWHWKLDO
8) CANELARMF
9) ROMHIPCIC
10) LICEGUSTJUEEA
11) RANHADOJL
12) MOTCE
13) RAMVEL
14) POTRYNK
15) LIVERADED
16) GINTREA
17) BUSIROM
18) BOOL
19) ANTTINSEW
20) RALSO

Comic Book Intelligence Quotient

Do you know comics? I mean really know comics? Match your wits against Poof The Wizard, and let's see how good you really are...

How well do you fare?

Answers on page 140

#Correct	Rank
0-6	Beat it
7-12	So-So
13-18	Hmm. Not Bad
19-24	Wizard Apprentice
25-29	Wizard
30	All Mighty & Knowing Lord of the Wizards

1) The reason Galactus imprisoned the Silver Surfer on Earth was:
A) He showed emotion by falling in love with Frankie Raye (Nova).
B) He used the Infinity Gems to stop Galactus from devouring the Earth.
C) He helped the Fantastic Four drive Galactus away from Earth.
D) He alerted the Fantastic Four of Galactus' approach.

2) When Solar, Man of the Atom first contacted the aliens which were orbiting Saturn, he...
A) wet his pants
B) made jokes
C) contacted Rai, Robot Fighter
D) turned invisible and observed them

3) What group of Super Villains destroyed the world that Blue Jay and Silver Sorceress came from?
A) Extremists
B) Secret Society of Super Villains
C) The Rogues Gallery
D) The Injustice League

4) Predators hunt humans because...
A) they love the taste of human flesh
B) they deem us unfit to live
C) we make good sport
D) they sell us as slaves on their home planet

5) Magnus, Robot Fighter has a device implanted in his body which allows him to...
A) turn his body as hard as steel
B) become as tall as Jim Shooter
C) wait a minute, that's impossible. Noones as tall as Shooter
D) listen in on all robot transmissions

6) Played Capt. America in the live action movie?
A) Matt Dillon
B) Matt Salinger
C) Frank Burns
D) Gareb Shamus

7) If the Invisible Woman turned a light bulb invisible, the room would...
A) go dark
B) stay lit
C) thinking about these deep philosophical questions gives me a headache.
D) yes

8) Sandman is the:
A) master of dreams
B) master of nightmares
C) master of fate
D) master of dairy products

9) In Gotham By Gaslight, Batman fought:
A) the Scarecrow
B) Jack the Ripper
C) Judge Dread
D) the Headless Horseman

10) The X-Man Gambit has the power to...
A) steal women's hearts
B) really get Wolverine p-o'ed
C) explosively charge things
D) all of the above

11) Who was on the cover to Wizard #3?
A) Spider-Man
B) Batman
C) Ghost Rider
D) Wolverine

12) The X-O armor is...
A) made of vibranium
B) alive
C) all warm and snuggly
D) made of brainium

13) Hawkman & Hawkwoman came to Earth in search of...
A) The criminal Byth
B) their son, Katar
c) the serial killer Shayera
D) Farfegnugen

14) Who invented Spider-Man's web shooters?
A) Reed Richards
B) Peter Parker
C) Hank McCoy
D) Ben Parker

15) Who became Monarch in Armageddon 2001?
A) Captain Atom
B) Starman
C) Hawk
D) Waverider

16) Who was L-Ron's original master?
A) Maxwell Lord
B) Rama-Tut
C) Oberon
D) Manga Khan

17) Who is married to Patsy Walker?
A) Jimmy Walker
B) Cameron Hodge
C) Damion Hellstrom
D) Frederick Drake

18) What substance if fatal to Daxamites?
A) lead
B) kryptonite
C) silver
D) Tollhouse cookies (mmm...)

19) Who will be directing Spider-Man: The Movie?
A) Oliver Stone
B) Francis Ford Copala
C) James Cameron
D) Ron Howard

20) Which villain has Quasar never faced:
A) Venom
B) Electro
C) Absorbing Man
D) Thanos

21) What model number was the evil Terminator in Terminator II: Judgement Day?
A) T-800
B) T-1000
C) C11-CMT
D) BLT hold the mayo

22) Which Super Hero didn't appear in the first Secret Wars series.
A) Daredevil
B) Spider-Man
C) Rogue
D) Thor

23) A Green Lantern must recharge his ring...
A) once a year
B) whenever he feels fear
C) when the little needle is on E
D) every 24 hours

24) What is the relationship between Nightcrawler and Mystique?
A) mother & son
B) brother & sister
C) aunt & nephew
D) all of the above

25) Who replace the Flash that died in the Crisis on Infinite Earths?
A) Jay Garrick
B) Barry Allen
C) Wally West
D) Ted Kord

26) Which Impact Comics hero died in his first issue?
A) the Black Hood
B) the Comet
C) the Hangman
D) the Jaguar

27) Who killed Danny Ketch's sister?
A) Deathwatch
B) Blackout
C) Snowblind
D) Zodiak

28) Wolverine is...
A) Japanese
B) Canadian
C) not too skinny, not too fat, he's a real hum-dinger and I like him like that
D) Australian

29) Darkhawk gets his powers from:
A) a haunted motorcycle
B) high tech battle armor
C) a mysterious amulet
D) he was born with them

30) To become a Wendigo, you must...
A) kill a member of your family
B) be a traitor to your own people
C) commit cannibalism
D) hunt animals for their pelts

ATTENTION WIZARD FANS

You think you're hot? You think you know something special about comics that your stupid friends wouldn't know in a million years? If so, let us know. Write a question with four multiple choice answers, send it to us, and we'll run it here. Send them to **CBIQ, P.O. Box 648, Nanuet, NY 10954-0648.**

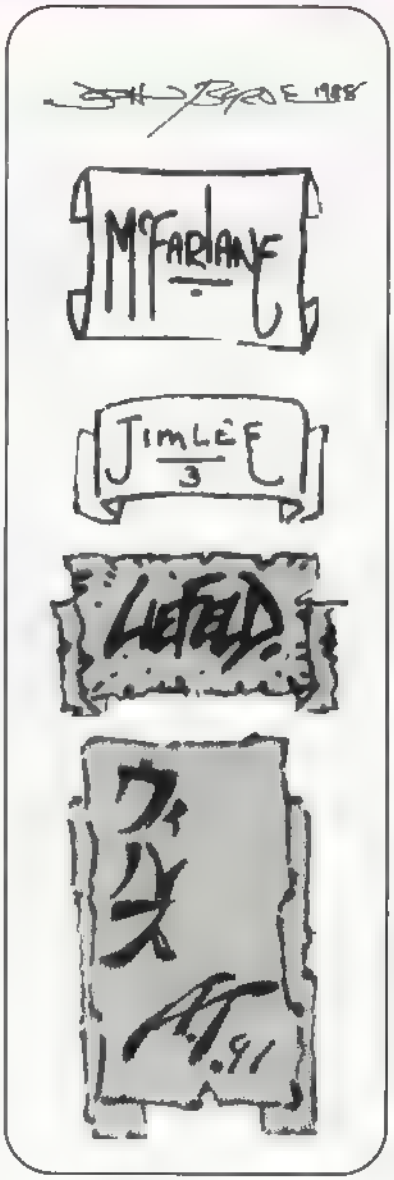
COLLECTING COMICS IN THE 90s

By Pat McCallum

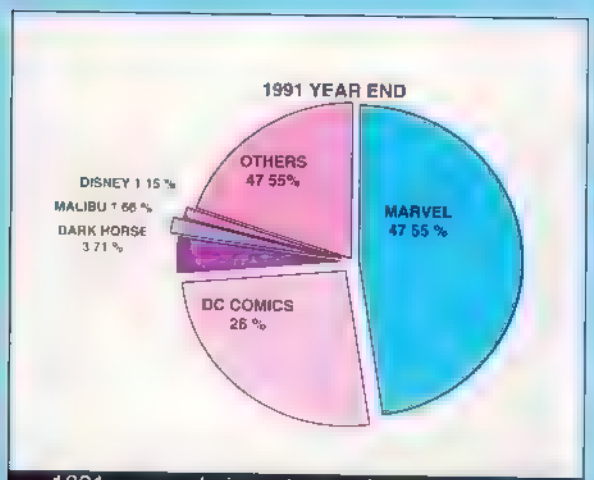
Hello again. This month we're going to discuss a highly questioned aspect of our industry: autographed comics. Though they have been around for quite some time, these collectibles are just now becoming fan favorites. Comic collectors everywhere are rushing around getting their favorite books written on, comics which normally would never see the light of day, much less a Bic. That which was once taboo is now a very hot ticket, but which every new fad that arises, there are questions which must be answered. For instance: Do autographed books go up in value? Does it matter where it gets signed, and what color ink should it be in?

Well, first off, autographed comics usually do go up. It depends on what book you have signed, and who signs it. A hot book + hot creator = $$. Signatures are also regional, so no set price can be put upon them. As for where a book should be signed, cover autographs are the most popular. Though this is up to the independent collector, have it signed where ever you like. And lastly, the color of the ink is very important. the best looking and most desirable colors are the metallic inks. They make the signatures look like a million bucks.

In closing, if you are thinking of purchasing an autographed book, you should insist upon some certificate of authenticity. This is to guarantee you that they're real, not some crappy forgeries. And if you're going to have them signed yourself, bring along a Polaroid and have the artist/writer sign the picture of you standing next to him. This way you have your very own certificate. Well, that's about it for this month, see you again in 30 days. Adios.



WIZARD Market Watch



1991 year-end piece sharee of the comic book market, according to Capital City Distribution

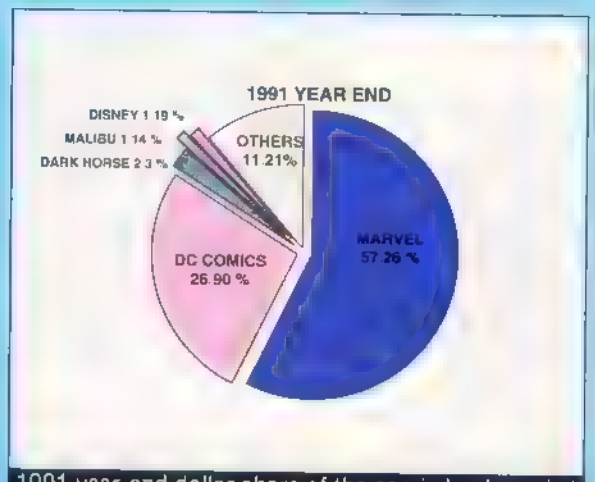
* No new surprises this month as Marvel's X-Books remain the #1 best seller. Weather it be X-Men, Excalibur or X-Factor, the merry mutants have ruled comicdom for over six months. With the creative force of Jim Lee, John Byrne, Peter David and Whilce Portacio at the helm, can anything topple the X-Dynasty?

* Ah, something can outsell mutant books. What, you might ask? Why, it's none other than that wacky monkey, the Punisher! Yup, Punisher War Zone #1, which debuted this month, outsold every X-Book out there. Ol' skull-chest really needed a breath of fresh air as the sales on Punisher and Punisher War Journal have steadily dipped over the past few months. Is this a novelty, or will Punisher regain his former glory?

* Other books which continue to climb the hot charts include Ghost Rider and the Dale Keown issues of the Incredible Hulk. Expect both items to continue to do well with a second Ghost Rider title, "Spirits of Vengeance" on the way, and the 30th anniversary of the Hulk, Incredible Hulk #393, is due out shortly (and sporting a green foil embossed cover to boot!).

* Let's not forget about DC Comics, now. Though none of their titles are going through the roof, they continue to produce some of the better written and drawn comics out there. Some comics to keep a "Wizard Eye" on include "The Titans Hunt" storyline running through New Titans #71-84, early issues of L.E.G.I.O.N. '89 & '90 and the Catwoman mini series (Michelle Pfeiffer is a hot babe that can work wonders in tights...).

* DC Comics, what is the problem? You used to be known for high quality art and stories, and Marvel was the people with the six different glow-in-the-dark gatefold



1991 year-end dollar share of the comic book market according to Capital City Distribution.

covers on the same book. Don't do this to your fans. Just go back to producing your one-time high quality books, the kind you were making before Robin II, War of the Gods, etc., etc. Don't substitute gimmicks for quality.

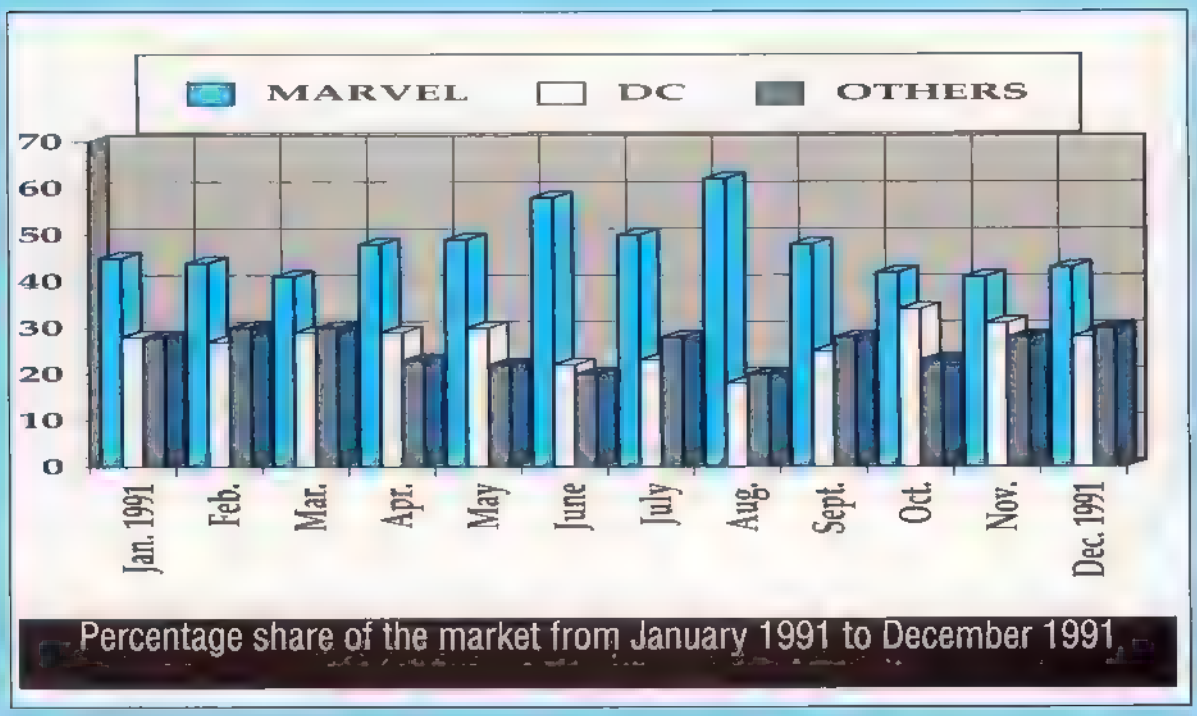
* On the other hand, Valiant continues to be an island of creativity in a sea of gluttons. Back issue sales of Magnus: Robot Fighter, X-O Manowar and Solar continue at a good pace, and their monthly issues remain a good read. Anyone out there tired of monstrous X-Ploitation, pick up a Valiant book and give a look-see. Can't hurt.

* On the flip side, Todd McFarlane's departure from comics has had a serious effect on his back issue prices, all of which have dropped over the last few months. Keep this in mind when purchasing those big bucks early issues of Jim Lee, Portacio and Liefeld. They may be hot now, but...

* The entire "Infinity Craze" has died down a bit. Prices are not going down, but they are showing signs of slowing down in sales. Expect sales to go nuts again this summer with the release of the "Infinity Wars", the sequel to the "Infinity Gauntlet." Also expect strong sales with the "Warlock and the Infinity Watch" series and the new reprint Warlock title.

* Growing in popularity is current "Marvel Comics Presents" artist Sam Kieth. His highly detailed work and his distinct artistic style has really begun to attract many a reader, and it might not be too long before he's ranked up there with Lee, Liefeld & Portacio.

* Here we are, still early in 1992, with a batch of really cool projects on the horizon. Everyone's favorite Czarnian, Lobo, returns in an all new four-issue mini series by Giffen, Grant and Bisley (yeah!). Expect issue #1 to be on sale sometime in March. Other news from DC is their new line of reprint comics, similar to what Marvel has done with X-Men #1 and Fantastic Four #1. Expect to see high quality reprints of Action Comics #252 - the first appearance of Supergirl, Brave and the Bold #28 - the first J.L.A., Detective Comics #327 - the first "new look" Batman, and much more. Pretty cool. In closing, keep an eye out for the cover of She-Hulk #39, and prepare to salivate.



Percentage share of the market from January 1991 to December 1991

ANSWERS PAGE

C.B.I.Q.

1)C 2)B 3)A 4)C 5)D
6)B 7)C 8)A 9)B 10)D
11)D 12)B 13)A 14)B
15)C 16)D 17)C 18)A
19)C 20)B 21)B 22)A
23)D 24)B 25)C 26)A
27)B 28)B 29)C 30)C

answers from pages 66 & 67

WORD JUMBLE

answers from page 65:

1) Mr Fantastic
2) Lightning Lad
3) Star Trek
4) Shadowcat
5) Optimus Prime
6) Omega Red
7) Hawkworld
8) McFarlane
9) Microchip
10) Justice League
11) Hal Jordan
12) Comet
13) Marvel
14) Krypton
15) Daredevil
16) Etrigan
17) Morbius
18) Lobo
19) New Titans
20) Solar

PUNISHER #10 CONTEST

ANSWERS FROM ISSUE #4

1) ODIN
2) HANK HALL
3) BIG BARDA
4) CZARNIA
5) NOMAD
6) PUCK

CODE: BAZOOKA

COVER SHOTS

answers from page 64

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

WORD SEARCH

answers from page 65:

ANSWERS PAGE

C.B.I.Q.

1)C 2)B 3)A 4)C 5)D
6)B 7)C 8)A 9)B 10)D
11)D 12)B 13)A 14)B
15)C 16)D 17)C 18)A
19)C 20)B 21)B 22)A
23)D 24)B 25)C 26)A
27)B 28)B 29)C 30)C

answers from pages 66 & 67

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CODE: BAZOOKA

COVER SHOTS

answers from page 64

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

WORD SEARCH

answers from page 65:

```
LRONAJNOSDERKWAHSPIDERMANAKI
SKDBHISPELLJAMMERORYPALGROOA
OAREOAOTSNAMNORIVLETCHICVDER
RWUIELRTOCENABSFLOWHIKHAIZTO
AOCRKHOPLRLKLUHERSIDOAHUIEEB
DTHAORKLIAMODINECNALNOGARDTI
AOOTMNVCGNRTAIETEACGNMTMHEEN
RHESWPANOSGGRKIMZHEAOAIOWSRE
TSOHRNIPDLUEAOABTLINBNMJIECV
HGJTEWLTLOVNRNOVAOEVALBOZNNA
VNIADOECOLARGLDPNVATPREDATOR
AOGEWTHPOHSIBAEAEVODWIRZRICD
DLBDAJAWARDLNAMOWREDNOWDDNVE
ELECTROVRILDOXEREDIRTSOHGETR
RRHEWJUDGEDREDDDRIBKCALBILZI
RONLIMARYJANEARDSREMROFSNART
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Let's Party!

Be the first in line to jump on the April Issue of Wizard... or be savaged by your peers.

- ***Rip Off*** *a mind-rending free Punisher poster by famed artist Wilce Portacio!*
- ***Hear*** *what Uncanny X-Men artist Whilce Portacio has to say.*
- ***Check Out*** *the lastest information on the new Aliens III film.*
- ***Look Up*** *all your comic info in the easiest to follow and most accurate comic book price guide available.*
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